

from West Virginia will be able to follow through on statements reported in the Wall Street Journal that say any claim whatsoever that says these investments are in any way related to my actions as a Member of Congress is categorically false.

I don't deny that statement. I don't actually take issue with that. I would just ask the gentleman if he could suspend his aggressive effort to fund this project until such time as these questions that surround this Cheat River project could be resolved.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Chairman, let me just close. Let me say, again, I fail to see the relevance of the number of defense contractors that Arizona has or the amount of Federal money that goes there by contract, by competitive bid or otherwise. How is that relevant to this process?

The truth is, there is something wrong with the process when we have thousands and thousands and thousands of earmarks, when we have 1,500 and just a couple of days to review them before we come here to the floor. There is something wrong with that process.

As I have said before, we can try all we want to conjure up some justification for the contemporary practice of earmarking. But if we think the taxpayers across the country are buying it, we are drinking our own bath water.

We are believing our own press releases if we think that's the case, because they're not. They're not believing it, and they shouldn't. There is no noble pedigree to this kind of earmarking. There really isn't.

So to appropriate money in this fashion is simply not becoming of this Congress. We are better than that. We should have more respect for the institution than that.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Arizona will be postponed.

□ 1530

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. FLAKE

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Chairman, I have one final earmark at the desk.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the Clerk will report the amendment.

There was no objection.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. FLAKE:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. _____. (a) LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—None of the funds in this Act shall

be available for the Houston Zoo in Houston, Texas.

(b) CORRESPONDING REDUCTION OF FUNDS.—The amount otherwise provided by this Act for "Department of Housing and Urban Development—Community Development Fund" (and specified for the Economic Development Initiative) is hereby reduced by \$300,000.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the order of the House of today, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. I thank the Chairman.

This amendment would prohibit \$300,000 in Federal funds from being used by the Houston Zoo in Houston, Texas, for an educational broadcast program and would reduce the cost of the bill by a consistent amount.

According to the earmark description in this certification letter, this funding would be used to develop an educational broadcast program to provide interactive distance learning, first to the neighboring institutions at the Texas Medical Center, and ultimately expanding the program to regional school districts.

According to the sponsor's letter, this program would enable children and students to ask questions of and converse with zoo experts in real time, replicating an in-classroom dynamic, but in an exciting and unique manner.

I should say the Houston Zoo is the permanent home of 4,500 animals; the zoo attracts more than 1.5 million visitors a year; general admission is \$10 for an adult, \$5 for a child. In fact, according to the City Navigator, annual revenue for the Houston Zoo in 2006 totaled \$39 billion. In 2006 alone, the Houston Zoo had over \$43 million in net assets and nearly \$20 million in excess revenue. It has a membership base of over 28,000 households. Corporate sponsors include Continental Airlines, Shell Oil, JPMorgan, BMC Software, Conoco-Phillips, FedEx. The list goes on and on.

Again, here, if we are going to start to fund programs at zoos like this, where does it end? Virtually every Member has a zoo or some type of wildlife preserve in their district. Where do we say enough is enough?

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of the time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I would like to claim the time in opposition.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FLAKE. Here again, let me simply say there are a lot of zoos around the country, a lot of zoos that every one of which would like to receive Federal funding. Where do we say enough is enough? Where do we say this zoo is worthy, they have two tigers; this one only has one lion? The tigers get it? I mean, where do we have some kind of equitable process rather than Members

just being able to designate funding of this type? We simply cannot continue to go on in this fashion.

Again, somebody will probably point out Arizona has a lot of defense contractors and gets a lot of Federal money. Again, I fail to see the relevance of that argument here. Let's throw the taxpayers a bone here, if you will, and let's finally say we are going to stop funding for one of these earmarks and actually return to fiscal sanity. We are running between a \$200 billion and \$300 billion deficit this year. Remember, money comes into Washington, we don't have enough to fund the programs, and so we are borrowing money to actually pay for programs like this. We can't continue to do that. I urge support for the amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I am not sure what standard the gentleman from Arizona follows, but as a member of the Appropriations Committee, as a guardian of the public Treasury, representing the people of Houston, I have approached all spending requests from the perspective as someone who has a second mortgage on the house and all the credit cards are topped out. My starting answer on all spending requests is "no," and "yes" has to be earned.

I have published all of my appropriations requests on my Web site for many years. I published both my request letters as well as the final result of those requests that the members of the committee have graciously agreed to support because they know that any request coming from me and my office has already been carefully screened. I won't submit requests that haven't already passed my very careful scrutiny.

Again, I approach the request from the perspective of there is not enough money in the Treasury to do it; the starting answer is "no," and "yes" has to be earned; the request has to fall within the functions of the Federal Government, and it has to be something for which there is no other source of revenue.

I am proud to represent the Texas Medical Center. I am proud to represent the Houston Zoo. This \$300,000 will be used by the zoo. They are matching it, providing a 3-1 private match to these dollars that are going to go exclusively into providing live video feeds to critically ill children and children that are dying of cancer who otherwise would have no interaction with the outside world.

The Texas Medical Center is recognized around the world as probably the greatest concentration of medical talent anywhere in the world. God forbid anybody within the sound of my voice comes down with cancer or a dreaded disease; but if they do, there is no better place to find a cure for that than at the Texas Medical Center.

If you are a child with terrible burns, trapped in your room and unable to get out and visit the zoo personally, there